

mob rule without requests for assistance from governors.³⁸

One of the speakers at the Cooper Union gathering who gained national and local attention was white activist Elizabeth Grannis. Grannis' speech challenging the color line was, like Manly's editorial, misquoted throughout the South, and she was ridiculed in the press. Hatred of Grannis grew to the point that secret meetings were held in Virginia and North Carolina to formulate speeches proclaiming white male disgust at her remarks. News of the organized hatred reached Grannis, and, on December 2, 1898, a letter from her was published in the *Wilmington Messenger*. In it, she defended her position even as she explained the mis-quote. The editor appended to her letter his own paternalistic observations that Grannis had simply chosen to be in the wrong place and in the wrong company.³⁹

³⁸ The powers of the president to step into state matters were limited by both the Constitution and historical precedent. The rights of states to manage their own affairs were still hotly debated topics decades after the Civil War. President Theodore Roosevelt's failure to intervene following the Atlanta Riot in 1906 was attributed by some analysts to precedent set by McKinley. Following suit, McKinley's precedent should have been the action of President Cleveland in 1894 when he called out Federal troops to intervene in a railroad labor strike. Cleveland's crutch for calling out the military was that the mail services were being interrupted by stopped rail traffic. McKinley had no such recourse except for the intervention of the mob in their removal of federal commissioner Robert Bunting. *Chicago Tribune*, November 18, 1898; *New York Times*, November 14, 1898; Charles Crowe, "Racial Massacre in Atlanta, September 22, 1906," *Journal of Negro History* (April 1969): 167.

³⁹ Peter Mallett of Fayetteville noted in his day book that he read in the papers of an "excited meeting of negroes last night at Cooper Union." He also noted that they were "enflamed to wild excitement by a speech of Mrs. Grannis an old abolition hussy—should be lynched." Day book entry, November 18, 1898, Peter Mallet Papers, Southern Historical Collection, University of North Carolina Library,

Other speakers, while just as controversial, did not attract equal attention. The Reverend W. H. Brooks believed the trouble was rooted in the white upper classes and that, when a few blacks "of the worst sort committed outrages," the whole of the black population suffered. Referring to Wilmington, he said that whites were "too strong" by virtue of the use of guns, telephones, and telegraphs. He urged blacks to remain vigilant and strong: "[O]ut of his trials and difficulties shall yet be developed a honest manhood" – bide their time but not to "die alone" in the last resort.⁴⁰

Fortune's grassroots offensive against white supremacy faltered. Other black leaders seeking to ease tensions began to push for a stop to such meetings because, as one editor phrased it, "over zealous indignation meetings do the race irreparable harm."⁴¹ William Henry Baldwin Jr., railroad magnate and Tuskegee trustee, wrote Booker T. Washington that he thought "Fortune and his kind are wrong . . . and, if they are allowed to go on as they have been, [they] will cause a bad setback to their people." Although some believed that Fortune was going about matters the wrong way, he shared the view that something should be done to address the violence. He expressed sympathy for Washington's position as a peacemaker and lamented that Washington had not been invited to speak on the issue in any major forum. Baldwin also noted that in Virginia, black railroad employees were being forced out of their jobs—"it never would have occurred but for the Wilmington troubles."⁴²

Chapel Hill. *Wilmington Messenger*, December 2, 1898; *Chicago Daily Tribune*, November 21, 1898.

⁴⁰ *New York Times*, November 14, 1898.

⁴¹ Letter to editor from black editor, *Washington Post*, December 4, 1898.

⁴² William H. Baldwin, Jr. to Booker T. Washington, December 4, 1898, as quoted in Harlan, *Booker T. Washington Papers*, 4: 525-6.